



Maricopa County

News Release

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Aseptic Meningitis Cases on the Rise

Maricopa County Public Health Reports

(Phoenix) - Maricopa County has experienced a significant increase in the number of aseptic meningitis (AM) cases in 2003. As of September 19, 2003, over 900 cases of aseptic meningitis have been reported in Maricopa County, compared to 160 cases reported by this same time in 2002. No deaths have been reported during this recent increase of AM. This current increase is most pronounced among children 5 to 14 years old.

Although Aseptic (Viral) Meningitis is much milder than bacterial meningitis, most often causing a short-lived sickness, Public Health officials are still concerned about the large number of people with the disease this year.

Symptoms of viral meningitis include headache, fever, sore neck, and nausea. It is an inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord, and may be caused by any of several viruses. There is no cure, but sufferers are encouraged to see a doctor to make sure they do not have bacterial meningitis, which can cause serious illness or even death.

Enteroviruses are the leading cause of aseptic meningitis across the country and are more common during the summer and fall. The dramatic increase in cases seen this year is largely due to an increase in circulation of Echovirus type 30.

Maricopa County is not the only location experiencing an increase in aseptic meningitis cases. California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, and South Carolina have also reported increases in aseptic meningitis this year.

Typically, about 1 in 500 persons infected with the virus will actually develop the disease. Some people may have mild symptoms that go unnoticed, such as gastrointestinal or respiratory symptoms, while others may have no symptoms at all. The virus is usually transmitted from person-to-person when hand-washing is inadequate. Good personal hygiene, especially hand washing, is the best way to prevent transmission. Parents should emphasize this practice with children. (See Fact Sheet for other prevention methods.)

Now health officials are asking people to follow mom's advice: wash your hands after using the restroom.

For more information, please see the MCDPH website at:
www.maricopa.gov/public_health/